

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BERLIN 06070 151932Z

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AMEMBASSY BONN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 6070

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SUBJ: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: ROLF SIEBER, GDR

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO US

REF: A. STATE 202994

B. USBERLIN A-195, SEPTEMBER 11, 1974

1. DURING A TWO HOUR LUNCHEON CONVERSATION ON NOVEMBER 15
ARRANGED BY DR. GEYER, CHIEF OF NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION OF
GDR FOREIGN MINISTRY, WE GAINED THE FOLLOWING IMPRESSIONS
OF AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SIEBER AND HIS WIFE.

2. PHYSICAL APPEARANCES. SIEBER LOOKS HIS AGE (45) BUT NOT MORE.
HIS HAIR IS BROWN WITHOUT A TRACE OF GREY. OF AVERAGE BUILD
(WEIGHT ABOUT 165) AND HEIGHT (5'10"), HE APPEARS TO ENJOY
GOOD HEALTH. HIS WIFE IS PLAINLY DRESSED, WEARING VIRTUALLY
NO COSMETICS. SHE WORE GLASSES, HE DID NOT.

3. PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND KNOWLEDGE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.
SIEBER SEEMS KNOWLEDGEABLE, IN A GENERAL WAY AT LEAST,
ABOUT A BROAD RANGE OF FOREIGN ISSUES. HE HAS TRAVELLED
QUITE WIDELY. THESE TRIPS HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN IN HIS CAPACITY
AS A MEMBER OF THE VOLKSKAMMER INTERPARLIAMENTARY GROUP.
HE SAID HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO RENEWING ACQUAINTANCES
WITH SEVERAL AMERICAN LEGISLATORS AND, IN THIS CONNECTION,
MENTIONED SENATOR SPARKMAN AND REPRESENTATIVE DERWINSKI.
SIEBER SAID THAT AS A MEMBER OF THE VLKSKAMMER HE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BERLIN 06070 151932Z

PARTICULARLY ENJOYED HIS WORK ON THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE. HE WILL RETAIN HIS SEAT IN THE VOLKSKAMMER AS HAVE ALSO GDR AMBASSADORS FLORIN (UN) AND GYSI (ROME), AND PLANS TO RETURN TO EAST BERLIN FOR PLENARY SESSIONS OF THIS BODY.

4. SIEBER'S SPECIALTY IS ECONOMIC HISTORY. HE STUDIED WITH GERHARD BEIL, STATE SECRETARY IN THE GDR MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN TRADE, AND WAS LOTHAR STRAGIS' (GDR COMMERCIAL ATTACHE-DESIGNATE IN WASHINGTON) ECONOMICS PROFESSOR. HE ALSO SUPERVISED CLAUD MONTAG'S (HEAD OF USA SECTION OF GDR INSTITUTE FUER INTERNATIONALE POLITIK) DOCTORAL DISSERTATION.

5. KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH. BOTH SIEBER AND HIS WIFE PROFESSED TO SPEAK ENGLISH BUT WE CONVERSED IN GERMAN.

WE WOULD IMAGINE THEIR SPEAKING ABILITY TO BE REASONABLY GOOD ALTHOUGH SIEBER HOPED THEY WOULD HAVE NO DIFFICULTY WITH "AMERICAN ENGLISH." IN THIS CONNECTION, HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT ENGLISH A CONSIDERABLY EASIER LANGUAGE TO LEARN AND MASTER THAN RUSSIAN, WHICH HE HAD TO LEARN DURING HIS FIVE YEARS OF STUDY IN MOSCOW.

6. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.S. UNDERSTANDABLY, THE SIEBERS SAID THE RIGHT THINGS ABOUT THEIR ASSIGNMENT TO WASHINGTON. SIEBER HAS A SPECIAL INTEREST IN STIMULATING TRADE. BOTH QUITE OBVIOUSLY LOOK FORWARD TO LIFE IN THE US, AND AN APARTMENT AT THE IRENE, IN BETHESDA. THEY WERE RELAXED, EASY CONVERSATION PARTNERS READY TO LAUGH EVEN WHEN THE JOKE WAS SOMEWHAT AT THE EXPENSE OF THE RIGIDITIES OF THE GDR.

7. PERSONAL. SIEBER AND WIFE APPEAR DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER, AND TO THEIR TWO CHILDREN: A NINE YEAR OLD SON WHO WILL ACCOMPANY THEM TO WASHINGTON, AND AN 18 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER WHO WILL STUDY ECONOMICS AND REMAIN IN THE FAMILY DWELLING IN TREPTOW-BAUMSHULENWEIG. BOTH CHILDREN APPARENTLY SPEAK ENGLISH AND THE DAUGHTER ALSO SPEAKS RUSSIAN. SHE REPORTEDLY SERVED AS AN ENGLISH-RUSSIAN TRANSLATOR DURING THE WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL IN 1973.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BERLIN 06070 151932Z

ACCORDING TO FRAU SIEBER, THE AMASSADOR-DESIGNATE MADE IT A PRACTICE TO TAKE HIS CHILDREN TO THE VARIOUS EAST BERLIN MUSEUMS ON SUNDAY MORNINGS. THE SIEBERS ENJOYED A COCKTAIL AND WINE; NEITHER SMOKED. FRAU SIEBER PLAYS THE GUITAR; HER DAUGHTER IS A FLUTIST.GROVE

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